



## COMPETITION PREPARATION OVERVIEW

The culminating competition is a critical component of the Schools Partnership Program. Students and teachers look forward to it all season!

Please note that this overview is simply intended to serve as a tool to assist Program Coordinators and volunteers with planning culminating competitions. Not all competitions will contain every component discussed in this overview. Consult your Special Olympics liaison for more information or if you have any questions.

### CULMINATING COMPETITION OVERVIEW

First, it is important to have an idea of what the culminating competition entails in order to know what to do in preparation for it. At competition, the order of events is typically as listed below. The associated times may vary depending on competition logistics.

<u>Event</u>	<u>Time</u>
Venue Set-Up	7:30am
Team/School & Volunteer Check-In	8:45am – 9:15am
Opening Ceremonies	9:15am – 9:45am
Team & Individual Skills Competition	10:00am – 12:00pm
Awards	11:45am – 12:00pm (or ongoing)
Venue Clean-Up	Immediately After Competition

By planning ahead of time, you can ensure that the day of competition runs smoothly! It may seem like a lot to accomplish, but the more you do before the day of the competition, the less stressful the day of competition will be.

### VENUE

Booking a venue is one of the first steps when planning a competition because venue availability is likely to influence the competition date. Make sure to communicate the competition date and venue to participating schools as soon as possible to allow them enough time to schedule transportation to and from the competition and to send field trip notices home with student athletes.

Set-up of the venue on the day of competition will vary based on sport, size of competition, and the layout of the venue itself. However, the general areas that must be set up remain the same from competition to competition. These areas include:

- 1) Competition headquarters
- 2) School/Team check-in
- 3) Volunteer check-in
- 4) Opening ceremonies
- 5) Team competition
- 6) Individual skills competition
- 7) Awards staging
- 8) Whole-School Involvement
- 9) First aid
- 10) Bathrooms



First-aid should be set up in an area that is shady/cool and has seating available. The best place is often the Competition Headquarters. Consider inviting the school nurse from the host location to be present for basic needs.

#### Supporting Documents

- Handout: Host Location Requirements
- Handout: Competition Supplies By Area

### **COMPETITION SUPPLIES**

Once the sport season begins, review the Competition Supply Checklist to make sure all supplies will be available on the day of competition. This is important to avoid any last minute surprises about missing supplies.

Work with volunteers, Special Olympics, and the host location to determine who is bringing which supplies to the competition and send a reminder email about those supplies during the week prior to the competition.

#### Supporting Documents

- Handout: Competition Supplies Checklist

### **COMPETITION REGISTRATION & SCHOOL/TEAM CHECK-IN**

Collect competition registration at least two weeks prior to the competition. By this time, schools should know exactly who is planning to attend because they will need to arrange for transportation and have students complete field trip forms.

Setting a firm registration deadline is very important because the information is needed to finalize documents for the competition (including the opening ceremonies script; team and individual skills competition schedule; school check-in list; etc.). Accepting registration after the deadline will only make your job harder!

Check-in is also the time to identify students who are not photo released. This is typically done by having non-photo released students wear a specific color bib or placing stickers on the front and back of their jerseys.

### **SCHEDULE**

Scheduling on the day of competition is extremely important. Sticking to the schedule is necessary for the competition to run smoothly and end on time. Make sure to distribute the Competition Schedule to participating schools at least three days prior to competition, or earlier if possible. Also, share the Competition Schedule with any other parties interested in attending the competition and bring copies of it on the day of competition.

Individual skills competition runs most effectively when each skill is set up as a station and athletes rotate through the stations. Separate athletes into groups, with each group starting at a different skills station, or set staggered start times with each group starting at the first skills station.

#### Supporting Documents:

- Template: Team & Individual Skills Competition Schedule
- Template: Competition Schedule Email



## **TRAVELING TO COMPETITION**

Schools are responsible for transporting their students to competition. School administration may designate any person from the district to coordinate transportation. If this person is not the Program Coordinator, the Program Coordinator should be in close contact with the designated person in order to make sure times and locations are communicated accurately.

When students travel to from one school to another for competition, the travel is treated as a field trip and school field trip policies should be followed.

It is important for the Program Coordinator to communicate with his/her supervisor(s) early in the season to ensure the logistics regarding travel are arranged and approved so there are no last minute problems.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteer recruitment should begin as soon as the competition date is booked. Review the Competition Volunteer Job Descriptions handout for more information about the volunteers needed to make the competition a success. Use this handout to inform prospective volunteers about the jobs available at the competition, to train volunteers prior to the competition, and also as written instruction to volunteers on the day of competition.

To ensure that volunteers are prepared for their roles on the day of competition, hold a volunteer orientation meeting within the week prior to the competition. If volunteers have not yet registered for specific jobs, have them do this at the volunteer orientation.

### Supporting Documents

- Handout: Competition Volunteer Job Descriptions
- Template: Competition Volunteer Orientation Agenda
- Template: Competition Volunteer Sign-Up

## **OPENING CEREMONIES**

Opening Ceremonies is always a favorite part of culminating competitions. It is a high energy, fun, and exciting way to start the day, and a great way to get the whole school involved! Appoint a key volunteer(s) to organize the opening ceremonies.

In the weeks leading up to the competition, there are a number of roles to fill in order to successfully execute the opening ceremonies. These include:

- 1) Master of Ceremonies (great job for a student volunteer!)
- 2) Student-athlete to say the Pledge of Allegiance
- 3) Student-athlete to say the Special Olympics Athlete Oath
- 4) Student-athlete and Law Enforcement representative to carry the Special Olympics Torch
- 5) Special Guest/Dignitary to speak during Opening Ceremonies
- 6) Fans in the Stands (PE and Study Hall classes make great Fans in the Stands)
- 7) Volunteers to serve as school escorts and help facilitate the parade of athletes



Encourage schools to bring their own school banners for opening ceremonies, but be prepared to provide banners for any schools that do not bring their own. Individual classes sometimes choose to bring a class banner, which is optional.

#### Supporting Documents

- Template: Opening Ceremonies Script
- Template: Opening Ceremonies Nomination Form
- Handout: Competition Volunteer Job Descriptions (opening ceremonies portion)

### **MEDIA AND SPECIAL GUESTS**

Invite local newspapers, television, radio, and special guests to attend the event. Special Guests may include principals of participating schools, district superintendants, school board members, the mayor, city council members, collegiate athletes, or other local celebrities. Choose one to honor by asking him or her to speak during opening ceremonies.

### **AWARDS**

Each student who participates in the competition receives a ribbon as an award. Members of Law Enforcement frequently volunteer to assist with the distribution of ribbons. Student-athletes love this!

Ribbons are distributed at the end of competition during a closing ceremony where student-athletes are called up by school, classroom, and/or team to receive their ribbons as a group. Alternatively, if there are too many students to do a closing ceremony in the allotted time, ribbons may be distributed throughout the day as teams and individual skills athletes finish competition. In this case, distribution of ribbons typically takes place by the awards staging area.

Get in touch with your Special Olympics liaison at least one week prior to competition to let her/him know how many ribbons are needed for the competition. It is always better to overestimate because unused ribbons can be returned for the next competition!

### **FOOD**

Generally, food is not provided at competition. Due to dietary restrictions, it is safer for students to bring their own lunch to enjoy at the end of competition. Some schools choose to bring snacks and/or lunch for their students, however this is entirely up to each school.